UNIT 4

Writing Good Paragraphs

In this unit, you will learn:

- What a paragraph is
- How to write topic sentences
- How to write supporting sentences
- How to recognise irrelevant sentences

Understanding Paragraphs

In Unit 2, you learned that a paragraph is a group of sentences about **one main idea**. This means that each paragraph has a topic (what you are writing about) and a **focus** (what you want to say about that topic). In a good paragraph all of the sentences will be connected to the topic and focus.

What does a good simple paragraph look like? Most simple paragraphs will include: **a topic sentence**, several **supporting sentences** and, sometimes, **a concluding sentence**.

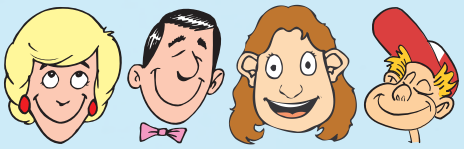
The ***topic sentence*** is often (but not always), the first sentence in the paragraph. The topic sentence tells the reader what the main idea of the paragraph is, i.e., the topic and focus of the paragraph.

Look again at the example paragraphs you have seen in this book. Look at the topic sentences.

Unit 1: My best ever vacation was in Egypt two years ago.

The **topic** is the writer's **trip to Egypt**, and the **focus** is that **it was his or her best ever vacation**.

Unit 2: I am lucky because I have a wonderful family.

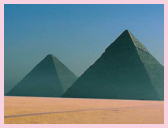


The **topic** is the **writer's family**, and the **focus** is **why the family members are wonderful**.

The ***supporting sentences*** give examples, explanation, information and opinion to support the main idea of the paragraph. Therefore, all **supporting sentences** should help the reader to understand the topic and focus of the sentence.

Look again at the example paragraphs you have seen in this book. Look at the supporting sentences.

In Unit 1: *We spent the first three days in Cairo and from there we visited the Pyramids and the Sphinx. The Pyramids were amazing.*



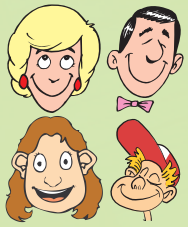
In Unit 2: *I love everyone in my family very much. My mum is very kind and looks after all of the family.*

All of these example sentences support the main idea of the paragraph.

The ***concluding sentence*** is the last sentence in the paragraph. It is often similar to the topic sentence and reminds the reader of the topic and focus of the paragraph, but it should use different words, if possible. Here are some examples:

In Unit 1: *It was a fantastic vacation.*

This concludes the paragraph about the writer's best ever vacation.



In Unit 2: *I guess I am lucky to have such a wonderful family.*

This concludes the paragraph about the writer's family.

Topic sentences

Exercise 1 – Choose a topic sentence

Look at the supporting sentences in these short paragraphs and choose the best topic sentence.

(1) *Mine is ten years old, and it is always breaking down when I need it. It costs a lot of money for repairs each year. Also, the heater doesn't work any more, so it is cold in the winter. I really wish I could change it.*

Choose the best topic sentence:

A. My car is very old. B. I wish I could buy a new car.

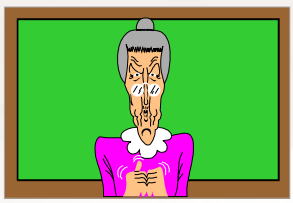
C. My car costs a lot of money.

(2) *The teachers are all very old and boring. The courses are not good. The buildings are old and dirty and there is no heating in them. Worst of all, it takes me two hours to get there. I wish I had gone to a different college.*

Choose the best topic sentence:

A. My college is too old. B. I don't like the teachers at my college.

C. I really hate my college.



Exercise 2 – Try it yourself

Imagine that your teacher has asked you to write a paragraph about the following topics:

A. Movies B. Computers

Think of three different topic sentences for each topic. Each topic sentence should focus on the topic in a different way.

Movies

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Computers

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Check your ideas with your teacher.

Exercise 3 – Write a paragraph

Now choose one of your topic sentences about movies or computers and write a short paragraph.

_____

Quiz 1 – Find the topic sentence

Look at Quiz 1 on the DVD. For each task you will see four sentences. One sentence is the **topic sentence** and the other three sentences are supporting sentences. You must decide **which sentence** is the **topic sentence**.

Note for teachers

If you are not able to use the DVD, you can download the quiz questions from the teacher's area of the web site.

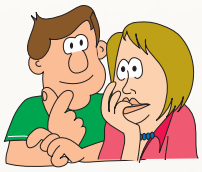
Supporting sentences

Read again what you learned above about supporting sentences.

Exercise 1 – Choose the sentences

Part 1 – Look at the topic sentences below and choose the best 4 supporting sentences for each one. Check ☑ the first box of the ones you choose.

1. Learning English is very difficult. Firstly, _____ _____. In addition, _____ _____. Also, _____ _____. Finally, _____ _____. I think it will take a long time to learn English well.



a)	I don't like speaking English.	☐	☐
b)	we don't have the chance to practise with native speakers.	☐	☐
c)	many people in the world learn English.	☐	☐
d)	the grammar is very different from my native language.	☐	☐
e)	the pronunciation is difficult to get right.	☐	☐
f)	it is easy to learn English vocabulary.	☐	☐
g)	I have only one English class a week.	☐	☐

2. I hate my job. For one thing, _____ _____. Another thing is that _____ _____. Also, _____ _____. However, the worst thing is that _____ _____. I think it's time to look for a new job.

a)	my colleagues are friendly.	☐	☐
b)	the salary is very low.	☐	☐
c)	my boss is always getting angry and shouting at me.	☐	☐
d)	the office is in a great location.	☐	☐
e)	I want to work there forever.	☐	☐
f)	I have to work until about nine o'clock every night.	☐	☐
g)	our office building is old and dirty.	☐	☐

Part 2 – Now number your supporting sentences 1 – 3 (in the second box ☐) in the order you want to write them in the paragraph. **HINT:** We often write our most important point last.

When you have finished, check your answers with your teacher.

Irrelevant sentences

Look again at the sentences in **Exercise 1**. The sentences you **did not choose** should all be **irrelevant sentences.** The sentences may be about the same topic, but they do not support the idea in the topic sentence. They are **irrelevant** to the **focus** of the paragraph.

Exercise 3 – Sort it out

Below are two separate paragraphs about London. All of the sentences are jumbled. You must decide: a) which are the two topic sentences, b) which are the correct supporting sentences for each paragraph, and c) which sentences are irrelevant.

Write **T1** and **T2** in the boxes ☐ for each topic sentence. Write **S1** in the boxes ☐ for each of the sentences that support **T1.** Write **S2** in the boxes ☐ for all of the sentences that support **T2**. Write **IR** in the boxes ☐ for all of the irrelevant sentences.

a) There are many excellent bars and restaurants. ☐

b) Millions of foreign tourists visit London for sightseeing every year. ☐

c) The city has many world-famous galleries and museums. ☐

d) Students from all over the world study at London's schools and colleges. ☐

e) There are many interesting markets and shopping centres. ☐

f) The city is home to the world's first subway system. ☐

g) London is probably the best place in the world to go to the theatre. ☐

h) People from all over the world live in the city. ☐

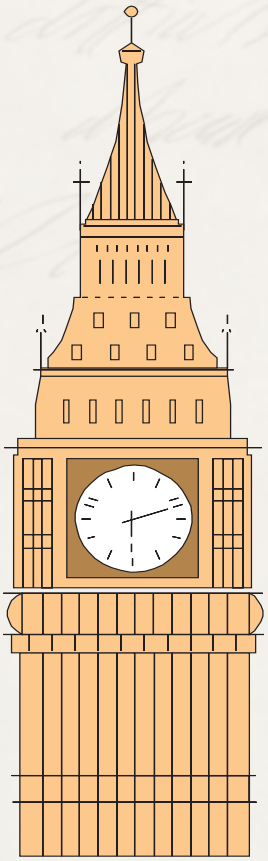
i) London is a wonderful city to visit for entertainment. ☐

j) London can be cold in the winter. ☐

k) London is perhaps the most cosmopolitan city in the world. ☐

l) You can hear many different languages being spoken on any London street. ☐

m) The city is in South East England. ☐



Check your answers with your teacher.

Now write the paragraphs below, choosing the order of the sentences as you wish.

Paragraph 1

Paragraph 2

Quiz 2 – Find the irrelevant sentence

Look at Quiz 2 on the DVD. You must decide **which sentence** is **irrelevant**.

Finale – My house is awful

Note for teachers

This exercise can be done in the textbook, as an assignment on paper, or online.

Your teacher will show you a slideshow. You will see photos of someone's house. You can make notes. After you have seen the slideshow, write a paragraph about the house. Imagine you live in that house. Your paragraph should have a topic sentence and several supporting sentences.

Take it away

Now go to the web site and complete the exercises for Unit 4.